

LOOMIS HALL, Shurtleff College
ALTON ILLINOIS

Madison Co

HABS NO. 25-20

HABS
ILL,
60-ALT,
IA-

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings
PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
CENTRAL ILLINOIS DISTRICT NO 25

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
EDGAR E. LUNDEEN, DISTRICT OFFICER
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

Loomis Hall, Shurtleff College, Alton, Illinois
MADISON CO

by Edgar E. Lundeen, Bloomington, Illinois -May 1934

Shurtleff College, founded in 1827, was the pioneer school of the west and is the oldest institution of learning in the Mississippi Valley.* It had its origin in a Theological and High School, known as the Rock Spring Seminary which was the first boarding school in Illinois and which was established in 1827 by John Mason Peck. This school was co-educational and opened with twenty five students. The school struggled along until 1831 when it was closed with the object of moving to upper Alton as a college.

In 1832 the institution was reopened under the name of "Alton Seminary". Members of the first Board of Trustees were: B. F. Edwards, M. D.; Rev. Hubbel Loomis, A.M.; Enoch Long; Wm. Manning, Jr.; Stephen Griggs; Geo. Smith, and Cyrus Edwards, LL.D.

In February 1832, Peck induced Hubbel Loomis to take charge of the Seminary and as the school had, at the time, no building of its own, school was opened in September in the town-house of upper Alton under the direction of Loomis. An act of the trustees permitted the students to cut trees and build for themselves log cabins on the Seminary Campus. Begun in 1832, the first real school building was completed by December 1833.

* Except for the Convent and School of the Ursulines at New Orleans, built 1727, one hundred years earlier.

It was rectangular in plan, two stories in height and made of brick. On the ground floor were the library and Chapel Hall, and above were two rows of rooms or dormitories with a central hall the length of the building, dividing them. These dormitories were small, dark, illconditioned and poorly ventilated. At the rear wall on the first floor was a brick fire place. Each room on the second floor was provided with a stove and all the pipes from the several stoves passed into a single pipe which passed horizontally the length of the building over the hall separating the dormitories. This pipe entered a single flue at the rear of the building and above the fireplace in the library below. The main building had a frame belfrey located near the midpoint of the roof ridge.

Many changes have been made in the form of the building since 1832. A two story rectangular brick unit was added upon the rear of the building and at right angles to the original building. Later a one story unit was added to the rear of this addition. The original exterior entrance was placed on one of the long sides. Later the front entrance was placed in the end of the building opposite the fireplace. This entrance is now protected by an enclosed brick vestibule.

This first building (sometimes called "Old Academic Hall") was named in honor of Hubbel Loomis, president of Alton Seminary 1832-1836, who spent his life in helping to

HABS
ILL,
60-ALT,
1A -

establish and build this school which was called "Alton Seminary". In 1836 it was changed to "Shurtleff College" in honor of Benjamin Shurtleff, M.D. of Boston, Mass. who, besides other valuable aid and encouragement, endowed the school with \$10,000.

Reference: Atlas & History of Madison County
pp. 56 -126

Wm. E. Lundeen
Bloomington, Illinois